

# Center for Environmentally Threatened Communities Newsletter

Monthly Update from the Center for  
Environmentally Threatened Communities (CETC)

Issue 17, October 2018

## Recent Events

**Actionable Climate Science for Two Highly  
Vulnerable Alaskan Communities**



Satellite image of Chefnak, Alaska, one community receiving Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Tribal Resilience funding for community-scale climate modeling.  
Photo: State of Alaska Coastal Hazards Program

Many communities in Alaska lack the information they need to inform long-term planning around climate change. In one small step to address this need, the communities of Chefnak and Newtok have been awarded funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Tribal Resilience program to hire an environmental modeling firm to develop downscaled risk assessments for their communities. The goal of the assessments is to predict future environmental conditions on the ground including rainfall, snowfall, erosion, flooding, permafrost melt, and other extreme events. The assessments will create maps for community planning and an environmental atlas that allows engineers to design resilient infrastructure based on expected future conditions rather than past

conditions. The project in Chefnak will estimate the risks associated with erosion and identify possible safe locations to migrate infrastructure to. The work with Newtok will inform infrastructure design at the community's relocation site of Mertarvik. Some results from these studies will be relevant to all communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. We will share more with you after the studies have been completed early next year.

## More Houses Needed at Mertarvik



Finished homes in Mertarvik, Alaska constructed by the regional housing authority Association of Village Council Presidents. Photo: Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation

As the community of Newtok, Alaska continues its relocation efforts, the greatest need is for community housing at the relocation site of Mertarvik, Alaska. There is currently a critical housing shortage in Newtok, with multiple families living in a single family home. The Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC), a nonprofit organization that specializes in building in arctic climates, estimated a need for a total of 105 houses in Mertarvik compared to the 66 in Newtok. This past summer, four Mertarvik homes were constructed by the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), the area's regional housing authority. In summer 2019, 13 more homes are expected to be built in the



Mertarvik, bringing the total on site to 21. Securing funding for housing is essential to the relocation process because it will expedite the relocation and provide improved quality of life. For example, occupied housing at Mertarvik will allow the community to become eligible for many traditional state and federal funding programs.

## Port Heiden Climate Adaptation Plan



View of Port Heiden, Alaska. Photo: ANTHC

Like many coastal villages, Port Heiden, Alaska is grappling with the effects of climate change including rising temperatures, disappearing sea ice, extreme erosion, and flooding. In response to these challenges, Port Heiden has revisited existing community priorities while taking future climate changes into account. A new report, “Climate Change in Port Heiden Alaska: Strategies for Community Health,” describes the environmental changes the community has experienced, is expected to see in the future, and details community priorities. Port Heiden worked with Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA), the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), Alaska Sea Grant, Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Collaborative, the Alaska Climate Science Center, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Department of Geosciences, and Artesian Knowledge LLC. The full report can be found [here](#).

## International Climate Justice Convening



Participants at the welcoming ceremony during the opening reception at the First Peoples' Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement in Girdwood, Alaska. (Photo: Unitarian Universalist Service Committee)

More than sixty community leaders and advocates from seven Pacific Island countries, the United States (US), and Bangladesh gathered in Girdwood, Alaska for The First Peoples' Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement. The Convening was a three-day gathering aimed at bringing together leaders and representatives from communities facing the harsh impacts of climate change. Participants shared their stories and experiences of addressing the risks associated with climate-forced displacement, learned from one another, developed strategies, and explored tools for moving forward in their advocacy work. Representatives from the US included sovereign nations from 16 Alaska Native Tribes along with the Quinault Indian Nation, Isle de Jean, Point-au-Chien, and Atakapa-Ishak Sovereign Tribal Nations. While discussions about climate displacement have typically focused on top-down governance approaches, the purpose of this convening was to honor the wisdom, knowledge, and experiences of frontline communities and to emphasize their right to self-determination in developing adaptive strategies. Later this year, the convening participants will release a shared declaration of principles, which will inform advocacy and public education efforts. The Alaska Institute for Justice and the Alaska Native Science Commission were two Anchorage-based nonprofit organizations that worked with 13 other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to inform and co-design the Convening, with co-sponsoring support from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) and the

Climate Justice Resilience Fund with in-kind assistance provided by members of the Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. While no future Convenings have yet been scheduled, participants indicated interest in continuing to build the valuable relationships formed during this event.

[Click here to read a blog post from Unitarian Universalist Service Committee on the Convening](#)

## **The Government Accountability Office Visits Alaska**



Staff from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) tour a house in Mertarvik, Alaska. Photo: GAO

Representatives from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently visited Alaska as part of their research into the effects of climate change on migration within the US. Their research investigates how climate change could affect domestic migration and what the key challenges are for Federal efforts to respond. As part of their research, the representatives visited Newtok, Alaska and Mertarvik, Alaska, (the community's relocation site) to learn about the successes and challenges the community has faced in their relocation process. Newtok was selected for a site visit because the community is advanced in the relocation process compared to other communities across the country. The GAO is in the

preliminary stages of research and scoping, and will select other communities for future site visits. In selecting communities to visit, they are hoping to identify areas that are facing different types of risks associated with climate change impacts and are in different stages of the relocation process. Possible areas of interest include Midwestern communities that have retreated from floodplains, Western communities dealing with wildfire and drought risk, and coastal areas dealing with the impacts of sea level rise. Their research will culminate in a report detailing the key challenges and successes communities have experienced working with the federal government on this issue as well as how future Federal efforts might address these challenges. Based on preliminary work to date, the GAO expects to complete their report around July 2019. We will distribute the GAO report via this newsletter when it is released.

[Click here to contact CETC to feature a recent event in your community!](#)

## **Climate Justice Resilience Fund Awards Grant to the Center for Environmentally Threatened Communities**

The [Climate Justice Resilience Fund](#) has awarded the CETC with a grant that will create a full-time community catalyst position dedicated to supporting highly vulnerable Alaskan communities to access financial and technical resources for their climate adaptation efforts. Funding will also enable communications that support communities in sharing their stories. We are honored to partner with the Climate Justice Resilience Fund for this important work.



## Community Profile: Kotlik



Aerial View of Kotlik, Alaska. Photo: ANTHC

Kotlik, Alaska is located within the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, one of the regions most impacted by climate change in Alaska. Erosion, flooding, and permafrost degradation threaten the habitability of the community's current site. Approximately 120 structures (47 homes, seven commercial buildings, seven community buildings, and 59 outlying structures) are in danger of being impacted by erosion in the next five to ten years.

Kotlik's current top priority is relocating homes threatened by erosion. Of the 120 structures at risk, 21 homes are considered to be high-risk, with four being imminently threatened. One home is in immediate jeopardy. The bank has already started to erode from beneath the foundation, which has left a corner of the home hanging above the river. It could collapse during the next significant storm event, endangering the life and safety of the resident. Kotlik is currently in the process of planning to relocate the threatened homes to a safe location with the assistance of ANTHC and the Alaska Institute for Justice. Kotlik's other priorities include erosion protection, identifying a safe site for long-term relocation, and addressing erosion impacts to the community landfill. The community is currently considering options and gathering information to inform planning around these priorities.



## Current Funding Opportunities

### **FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant**

This is an opportunity to fund projects identified in your community's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Eligibility: Any local or Tribal government with an approved natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Due Date: Early January 2019.

More Information: To read the Notice of Funding Opportunity, click [here](#). If your community would like assistance with an application, contact the CETC at [etc@anthc.org](mailto:etc@anthc.org) or 907-729-4521.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Planning Assistance to the States (PAS)**

The PAS program provides planning assistance through studies to address water resource issues. The program can award up to \$100,000 of assistance to gain access to information to inform your community's planning. Possible activities include: developing an annual average future erosion rate, determining what infrastructure will be impacted by erosion and flooding through 2050, identifying the safest site where threatened community infrastructure can be moved to, assessing the structural integrity of infrastructure estimated to be impacted by flooding and erosion by 2050, and other activities.

Process: To request assistance under the PAS program, a community must submit a letter to the Alaska District of the USACE. More information on the program can be found [here](#). If your community would like assistance with submitting a request, contact the CETC at [etc@anthc.org](mailto:etc@anthc.org) or 907-729-4521.

## Resources

### **Project Planning & Development Training from Three Star Enterprises**

In this three-day training, participants will gain a foundation for creating a community-based project and grant writing skills. With this information, you will have the ability to adapt them to any community, any project, and any funder. Topics will include: defining the community condition, project goal setting, identifying resources and partnerships, establishing objectives, determining deliverables, developing an approach and plan, determining outputs, identifying staffing needs and potential challenges, creating a sustainability plan, and determining project costs.

This training will be held in two more locations: **Utqiagvik** (Barrow), November 6-8; and **Fairbanks**, February 12-14

For more information, contact [r.perry@3starak.com](mailto:r.perry@3starak.com)

To register for the Utqiagvik (Barrow) training, contact [workforce@ilisagvik.edu](mailto:workforce@ilisagvik.edu); registration for the Fairbanks training will open soon.

### **FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program Webinars**

If your community is interested in submitting a FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant application, the FEMA Region 10 Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Branch is offering webinars for Tribal governments. The following free webinars are available.

- eGrants Introduction: November 7th, 11am-12:30pm. This webinar will walk grant applicants through the process of applying through the eGrants system. Attend if you are Tribal government applying for a 2018 PDM grant. Register [here](#).

### **Training Opportunities from the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities (AAHA)**

The following trainings are available from the AAHA. Both trainings are located in Anchorage, Alaska. Click [here](#) for more information.

- Audit Preparation: October 31-November 1. This two-day training will provide attendees with the resources and tools

that Tribes can utilize to prepare for and be "audit ready" for their annual audit of their Financial Statements and Single Audits. Register [here](#).

- Contract Administration & Procurement: November 27-29.  
This interactive three-day training will provide attendees with a formal workshop on Procurement and Contract Administration. Register [here](#).

## News Roundup

[Alaska Coastal Mapping Gaps & Priorities](#): This report released by the State of Alaska Coastal Hazards Program details the gaps in the quality and quantity of coastline baseline data that are necessary to inform decision-making around the state. These data are critical for environmentally threatened communities, who still lack baseline hazard data.

[Climate Change Sets People on the Move](#): This story explores how communities around the world are adapting to changing environmental conditions by migrating elsewhere. In Alaska, many vulnerable communities are considering migrating partially or entirely to safer sites.

[The Arctic Youth Ambassadors Program is Bringing Awareness to Environmental and Community Issues in Alaska](#): Younger generations will play an important role in addressing the challenges that many Alaska Native communities face associated with a changing climate. The Arctic Youth Ambassadors Program brings together diverse young people from across Alaska to serve as ambassadors for their communities and build awareness about life in the Arctic.

### [8 Things You Need to Know About the IPCC 1.5°C Report](#):

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released a new report entitled "Global Warming of 1.5° C," the purpose of which was to detail what it would take to limit global warming to 1.5° C and what the consequences would be of missing it. The World Resources Institute compiled eight key findings from the IPCC report. Alternatively, to read the full report, click [here](#).

## Upcoming Events

### **Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management (ATCEM)**

November 27-30, 2018

ATCEM is an annual gathering organized by ANTHC that brings together Tribes, non-profits, and State and Federal organizations, for a week of environmental conversations focusing on finding and implementing solutions to address the unique environmental concerns facing Alaskan communities. Registration for ATCEM at the Anchorage Downtown Hilton is now open. Click [here](#) to register.

### **About the Center for Environmentally Threatened Communities**

The Center was established with a Denali Commission grant to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and supports rural Alaska communities experiencing infrastructure impacts associated with environmental threats such as flooding, erosion, and melting permafrost.

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